

Message Text

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46

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AGR-20 SCS-03 AID-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00

HEW-08 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03 PRS-01 RSC-01 SCA-01

USIA-12 PC-04 OMB-01 EB-11 COME-00 PM-07 H-03 L-03

NSC-10 SS-15 RSR-01 /155 W

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R 121355Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8458

INFO AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SANTO DOMINGO 2845

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ECON, EAGR, DR

SUBJECT: DROUGHT HITS DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

1. SUMMARY: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC IS BEGINNING TO FEEL IMPACT OF A NATION WIDE DROUGHT WHICH COULD HAVE A SERIOUS IMPACT ON THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY AND POSSIBLY BRING POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS AS WELL.

2. THE MAY RAINS, WHICH ORDINARILY MARK THE END OF THE DOMINICAN DRY SEASON AND PERMIT PLANTING OF MUCH OF THE COUNTRY'S ANNUAL CROPS, WERE NOT VERY PLENTIFUL THIS YEAR. OFFICIAL GODR DATA TAKEN FROM 70 STATIONS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY SHOW THAT MAY RAINFALL WAS 74 PERCENT LESS THAN THE 20 YEAR AVERAGE FOR THAT MONTH. APRIL RAINFALL, WHICH IS LESS IMPORTANT FOR PLANTING, WAS OFF 21 PERCENT.

3. DURING THE SEVERE 1968 DROUGHT, THE WORST IN RECENT MEMORY, AN ESTIMATED \$40 MILLION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION WAS LOST DUE TO REDUCED RAINFALL. NO SUCH ESTIMATE CAN YET BE MADE CONCERNING THE IMPACT OF THE PRESENT DROUGHT, BUT SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE IS BEING CAUSED.

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4. IN CASE OF SUGAR, WHERE ADEQUATE RAIN IN MAY IS VITAL TO THE APPROXIMATELY 1/6TH OF THE CROP WHICH IS REPLANTED AT THAT TIME EACH YEAR, REDUCTION OF NEW YEAR'S SUGAR PRODUCTION COULD WELL BE SIGNIFICANT.

5. SOME OF THE DAMAGE DROUGHT MIGHT HAVE CAUSED WAS MITIGATED BY AVAILABILITY OF WATER FROM THE TAVERA DAM RESERVOIR TO IRRIGATE PART OF IMPORTANT CIBAO VALLEY. HOWEVER, THE USE OF LARGE QUANTITIES OF RESERVOIR WATER FOR EMERGENCY IRRIGATION PURPOSES PLUS THE LACK OF RAIN, MAY HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE COUNTRY'S ELECTRIC POWER SITUATION. THE RESERVOIR HAS DROPPED SO LOW THAT POWER COMPANY SOURCES REPORT THAT UNLESS IT RAINS A GOOD DEAL SOON POWER PRODUCTION AT TAVERA WILL HAVE TO BE SUSPENDED. SINCE TAVERA PRODUCES 80 MW'S OF THE COUNTRY'S 308 MW OF PEAK HOUR PRODUCTION (WHICH IS ONLY SLIGHTLY GREATER THAN PEAK DEMAND) POWER OUTAGES IN MANY AREAS DURING HIGH DEMAND HOURS WILL BECOME STANDARD PRACTICE AS THEY WERE BEFORE TAVERA CAME ON STREAM AT THE END OF 1972.

6. WATER SHORTAGES ALSO ARE AFFECTING THE CITY OF SANTO DOMINGO WHERE MANY POORER NEIGHBORHOODS OF THE CITY HAVE BEEN SUPPLIED WITH WATER ONLY INTERMITTENTLY FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. SUCH WATER SHORTAGES ARE FAIRLY COMMON IN SANTO DOMINGO, WHERE A WATER SUPPLY EXPANSION PROJECT NOW GETTING UNDERWAY WILL TAKE MANY MONTHS TO ALLEVIATE THE SITUATION. NEVERTHELESS, WATER SHORTAGES DURING THE NORMAL RAINY SEASON ARE UNUSUAL. IF THEY CONTINUE OVER A PROLONGED PERIOD, SOME DEGREE OF SOCIAL AND PERHAPS POLITICAL UNREST COULD ENSUE.

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